

Germantown fire station slated for 2008 winter debut

■ Needed to support growth in upcounty

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The first new fire company in Montgomery County in more than 25 years was formally welcomed with a groundbreaking ceremony last week.

Germantown/Kingsview Fire Station No. 22, near the intersection of Clopper and Germantown roads near Boyds, is expected to open in late 2008, county officials said. Construction began in September.

The facility, also referred to as the West Germantown station, is the first of four upcounty stations officials expect to begin construction on in the next three years, said

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Montgomery County Fire Chief Thomas W. Carr Jr. speaks Thursday at the groundbreaking ceremony for Germantown/Kingsview Fire Station No. 22. County Executive Isiah Leggett looks on.

STATION

County Council President Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown, Travilah and Clarksburg stations are all in various stages of the design process.

"This is the time we've been waiting for," Assistant Fire Chief Bradley S. Graham said at the Nov. 29 ceremony, which drew about 100 people.

A 1999 county study detailed the need for increased fire services, and the County Council gave the go-ahead for six new fire stations — including the four upcounty facilities — in 2000. Station No. 22 will be the county's first new fire company since 1981, according to Pete Pfringer, a county fire rescue services spokesman.

Station No. 22 will serve a 23.7-mile area stretching roughly from Route 117 to Route 28 bounded by Buck Lodge and Waring Station roads to the east and west. The station will answer calls to the South Germantown Recreational Park, including the Maryland SoccerPlex, as well as homes, commercial properties and schools in the Copper Village and Kingsview Village sections of Germantown.

One station currently serves the Germantown area — Fire Station No. 29 on Crystal Rock Drive, which opened as a sub-station of Hyattsville's Fire Station No. 9 in 1981 and was expanded in 1988. In 2006, 5,774 fire rescue incidents occurred in the station's 28.4-square-mile area, officials have said, and it had an average response time of 9.25 minutes to fire incidents, longer than the department's six-minute goal.

The county's population has grown by 61 percent since the current Germantown station opened, increasing from 579,063 in 1980 to 932,131 in 2006, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Germantown, which currently has a population of around 86,000, has been adding about 2,000 residents a year since 1974, according to county planning department figures. Thirteen new schools have opened in Germantown since 1981, according to Bruce Crispell, director of long range planning for Montgomery County Public Schools.

The station will be a one-story, 16,770-square-foot structure and include six apparatus bays, administrative and living areas, private quarters and support space.

The station will open with four firefighters staffing one fire engine as well as four emergency workers for its two EMS units, and volunteer personnel may pitch in on nights and weekends.

"We couldn't be happier," Trish Huffelinger, executive director of the nearby Maryland SoccerPlex, said last week, adding that the facility averages two or three transports per tournament. "I just wish it had opened seven years ago."